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OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2019

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...50 years after...

I was already 1 year old when Saipan hosted the precursor of what would become the Micro Games—the Micronesian Olympic Games in 1969, drawing the best athletes from across Micronesia. It has now been 50 years since that extraordinary moment. The shining results and the history that were made make for prodigious entries in the annals of Pacific history, but it is the backstories and the human drama scattered throughout the interstices of that historic event that make the games an absorbing read. Roselyn Monroyo's look back at the 1969 Micronesian Olympic Games is chockful of details enough to fascinate even those with just a passing interest in sports history. For even more materials, check out the KPV Collection at http://www.kpvcollection.com/. ***See story on Page 18***

We're serious. Want to get anything sports-related off your chest? For questions, criticisms, letters, and suggestions, email them to editor@saipantribune.com.

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
editor@saipantribune.com
Managing Editor

COVER ART

The 50 years that have passed since Saipan first hosted what would later become the Micro Games is remembered in this edition, which also includes a look at the fascinating sport of rappelling.

Photos taken from the KPV Collection (www.kpvcollection.com)

TAGA SPORTS

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JERRY TAN
President

ELI ARAGO
Senior Vice President

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
Managing Editor

MARK RABAGO
Associate Editor

JUN DAYAO
Art Director

NHORLEEN BITCO
Graphic Artist

ROSELYN MONROYO
KIMBERLY BAUTISTA
Staff Writers

BEA CABRERA
DRE DELOS SANTOS
MAMI IKEDA
REICA RAMIREZ
Contributors

BETH DEL ROSARIO
DONNA RIVERA
ALYSSA VELASCO
Advertising

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Writer's BLOC

KIMBERLY BAUTISTA
Kimberly was previously the Saipan Tribune's crime reporter but is transitioning into sports writing. Although the learning pool is deep, she thinks the many guys in sweaty uniforms she sees each day make up for the challenges that come with the job. Contact her at kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com.

BEA CABRERA
Bea Cabrera grew up involved in sports. She was a volleyball varsity player in high school and shifted to basketball varsity in college. She started Crossfit in 2014 and this is the why fitness has turned into her lifelong passion. She believes that inspiring people to engage in healthier lifestyles is the best feeling in the world. To reach Cabrera, email her at beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com.

DRE DELOS SANTOS
Dre has spent the last six years working with people from all walks of life in Hawaii. He is now a personal trainer at Gold's Gym. He is featured on fitness sites such as Weight Watchers, T-Nation, and STACK. Email him at www.dredelossantos.com.

MAMI IKEDA
Mami considers herself a daughter of the Koto Restaurant that was ran by her late parents in Susupe back in the late '70s to early '80s. A member of disaster relief team C.O.R.E. and the Commonwealth Racing Federation, and an advocate for the Commonwealth Cancer Association, Mami loves being a crazy cat mom and herb gardening. Contact her at mami99950@gmail.com.

ROSELYN MONROYO
Roselyn was fascinated by the 1969 Micronesian Olympics' trivia on a prisoner runner on Rota. It reminded her of the "time trial" she did in grade school—running away from a dog, which successfully got a piece of her behind. Contact Roselyn at roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com.

MARK RABAGO
Mark is also afflicted with Peter Pan Syndrome but, instead of overpriced drones, his poisons are extremely overpriced Japanese super robots called Chogokins, and Transformers. Contact Mark at mark_rabago@saipantribune.com.

REICA RAMIREZ
A Mount Carmel School alumna, Reica currently goes to the University of California-Berkeley where she is taking up a degree in communications. As a Saipan Tribune intern, Reica didn't let herself be fazed by the foul-mouthed chat group of the newspaper's editorial department.

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EASY BASIC MISO SOUP *tofu and wakame*

MAMIIKEDA
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

Love miso soup? The authentic, real deal way to make miso soup starts with making dashi (fish broth) with bonito (katsuobushi, the shredded dried tuna) which requires tools, time, and technique, but Japan has spoiled all housemakers (LOL) and invented "dashi flakes," better known as Hondashi, that can do magic to your Japanese dishes. Using dashi flakes, miso soup will be a quick 5-minute dish! The ingredients in this recipe is tofu and wakame but, once you master this recipe, you can swap them with whatever veggies and other ingredients you have in your fridge (Just make sure to cook all your ingredients before you put the dashi. My favorite is daikon radish and potato. Yum!).

INGREDIENTS

4-5 persons

1 pack tofu (soft or firm)
1 handful dried cut wakame (seaweed)
1 tablespoon dashi flakes (Hondashi)
1/2 ladle miso paste
800 ml water

1 Boil water in a pan. Dump diced tofu and dashi flakes, then bring to a boil.

2 Add dried wakame, and bring to another boil (don't cook it too much, the color will turn brown!).

YUMMY TIP: *Don't forget to skim off the white foams with your ladle! This one little effort makes a big difference!*

3 Place the miso paste in a ladle and sink it just below the surface of your soup. Dissolve the miso paste in your ladle using a chopstick or fork, and release it little by little into the rest of the soup (If you don't do this, the miso won't dissolve well, and someone will get a ball of miso in his/her bowl!).

YUMMY TIP: *Don't put too much miso (in the photo, I put a little too much). It's a healthy, fermented ingredient, but it's really high in sodium. Put less than half a ladle first, then add to your taste. The savory dashi taste should dominate, not the miso!*

4 Once you mix in the miso, don't boil it (If you do, you will lose the bestest aroma and taste of miso!). Turn off your stove and serve while it's hot!!

YUMMY TIP: *Garnish with cut green onions before serving, for extra yumminess!*

WHERE TO BUY

- **Miso paste/Takeya brand** ($3.50-$4.50): Blue Sky Market (San Antonio)
- **Dashi flakes/Hondashi** ($8.50/box of two packets) and dried cut wakame ($2.99-$3.99): Himawari or Joeten
- **Tofu:** Any store on island ($1.45/pack)

Contact Mami Ikeda at mami99950@gmail.com.

MORE

"Due to your current

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standing, you are now in

BETTER

academic probation."

U.S. AIR FORCE/ OCTAVIUS THOMPSON

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Diana Valdez, 39th Force Support Squadron, Military Personnel Flight superintendent of career development and individual personnel readiness, finishes her workout with a set of goblet squats at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, July 19, 2018. The bodybuilding competition encouraged Valdez to be fit-to-fight and motivated her to practice a healthier lifestyle.

DRE DELOS SANTOS
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

For much of my life, I was consistently subpar as a student. In high school I was at the very bottom. So, when I read that email a week before the start of my second semester as a freshman in college, I thought to myself, "Congratulations! You did it again, moron."

It wasn't the first time I failed miserably in academics, so there was a shade of self-deprecating humor. As a matter of fact, I might have toyed with the idea of throwing in the towel. Why fight it, right?

Now in the case for looking presentable without your clothes on (or however you want to perceive it), the dilemma isn't all that different. Remember the day you said you wanted to lose 20 pounds? Drop down a few pant sizes? I'd imagine you started and stopped a number of times before things started to finally make more sense.

We always make things more complicated than it needs to be when in reality, the application is a simple process.

1 MORE ISN'T BETTER. BETTER IS BETTER.

The major thing that sticks out with most beginners is, they overestimate how much they need to be doing. Consequently, they always end up burning out. Extremes never pan out well.

Newbies are much better served building sustainable habits instead of going gung-ho so that this whole endeavor doesn't end up a complete mess. I can't tell you how many times I've had consultations with people who are often flummoxed when I say you don't need that much to see measurable improvements.

Here's why: untrained individuals have the capacity to put on muscle and lose body fat at such a tremendous rate they don't have to do anything extraordinary. On the flip side, experienced gym-goers don't have that luxury anymore.

Once you get a good grasp on how to navigate the common roadblocks and seamlessly fit it into your lifestyle, that's when you can take it to the next level.

SAMPLE WORKOUT

DAY 1
A Dumbbell Goblet Squat
B1 1-Arm Dumbbell Row
B2 Push-Up
C Landmine Romanian Deadlift

DAY 2
A1 Dumbbell Incline Press
A2 Chin-Ups or Assisted Pull-Ups
B Barbell Hip Thrust
C Walking Lunges

DAY 3
A Kettlebell Deadlift
B1 TRX Suspension Rows
B2 Standing Dumbbell Shoulder Press
C Leg Press

Contact Dre Delos Santos at dredelossantos7@gmail.com.

2 BE MINDFUL OF DIETS THAT EXCLUDE A TON OF FOOD GROUPS

In the past, much of what we thought to be optimal on the nutrition front has now been looked at differently. We now know that when calories and protein are equated, there's virtually no difference among all the diets. For example, you can still experience a negative outcome going on a lower carb diet if you're still eating way too much. Interestingly enough, despite this evidence, there are some people who still aren't sold and carry out a different sentiment.

Consider this alarming statistic: 90% of the people who lose weight gain it all back within one to two years. My point is: it's all a matter of preference, folks.

Success leaves clues, and historically, those who are able to manufacture significant changes in their body composition (and keep it), manage their food intake accordingly.

There's legitimately no superior diet.

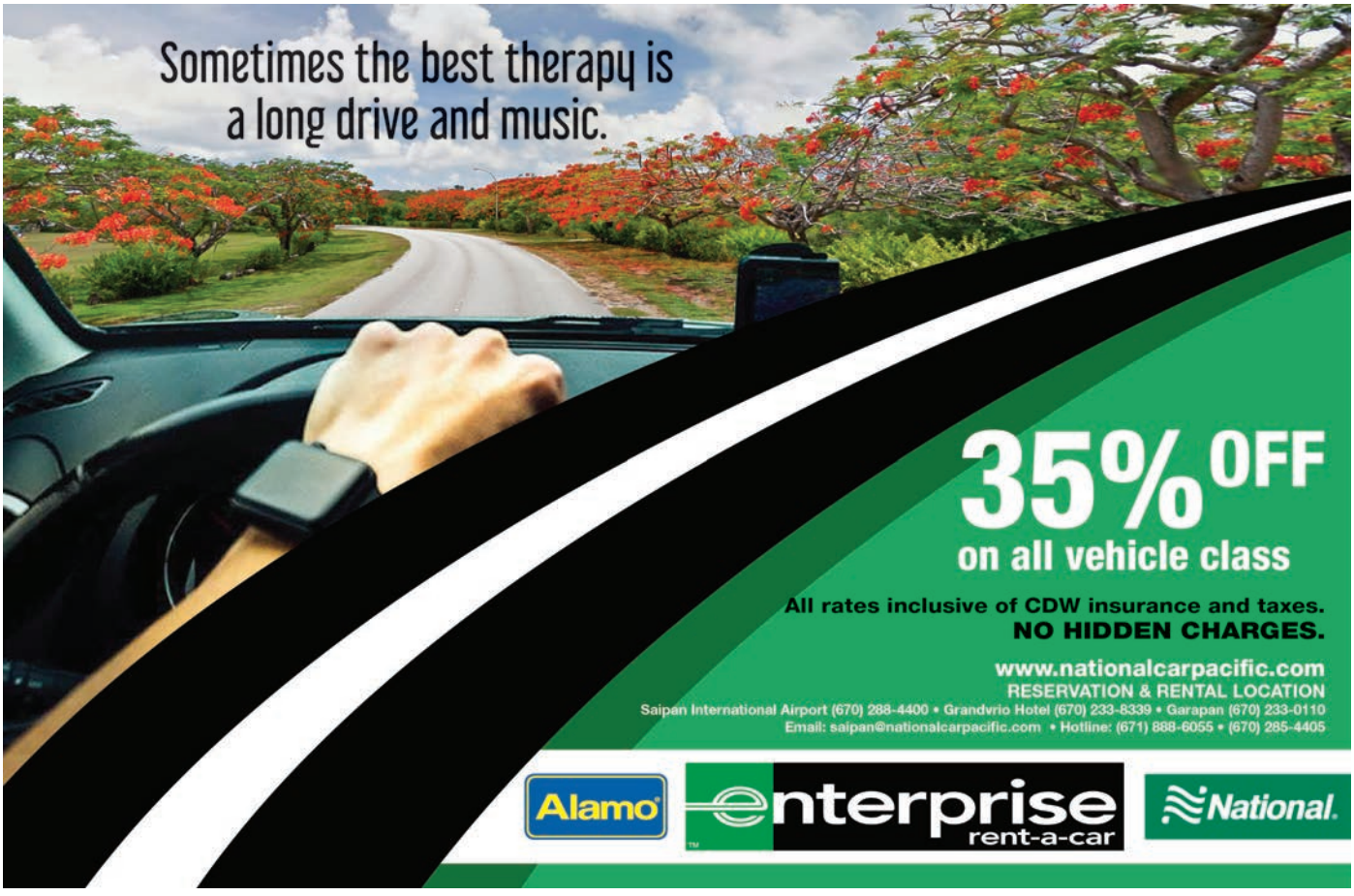
3 IF POSSIBLE, HIRE A QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL

A lot of things in fitness are presumably taken out of context, so I really think it's comical when self-proclaimed gym experts and healthcare professionals try to give their two cents. Most of their recommendations largely come from a straw man bias. Just because a workout makes you tired and sore doesn't

Master Sgt. Jonathan Oliver performs an incline dumbbell press as Technical Sgt. Michael Belleau spots and encourages him during a weighted press.

necessarily mean it's going to make you better. Remember, better is better.

I'm fully on board for accommodating your workout inclinations—there's no denying there is value in different training modalities. However, your workouts must be centered around exercises that exhibit high levels of muscle recruitment. Hiring a qualified trainer to impart practical wisdom; teach you how to squat, deadlift, press, row safely and effectively instead of standing on a BOSU ball is always time well spent.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Kosuke Sato

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

Even at 48, runner Kosuke Sato has no plans to slow down.

The Tokyo native has consistently been leaving his opponents in his dust in recent running events.

Sato, who is the general manager of Kingfisher Golf Links in Talafofo, has virtually ruled short- and medium-distance events on Saipan the past several years.

This year alone, he has won the 40-49 age group of the Triple J 5K last March, finished Top 6 overall in the 10K event of the Saipan Marathon during the same month, was first to the finish line in the SDA 5K Hope Run in April, topped the JP Hero 5K Run last May, and was the first overall as well in September's 6K run of the IT&E Duathlon.

TAGA *Sports* couldn't keep up with the speedy Sato for this quarter's Q&A so it opted to just sit down with him in this interview.

How did you get into running?

I started running on Saipan when I decided to join the Saipan Marathon.

How do you motivate yourself?

I take running as part of my own weight control.

What are your favorite running spots on island?

I like to run at the Oleai track oval. The track is made up of polyurethane. It is the ideal surface for athletes because it gives a cushion feel. I can use the beautiful facility without paying. I also enjoy watching people play soccer and Frisbee when running.

How often do you run in a week and how long?

I run four to five times a week. Mostly10K. In all, I run about 150K-200K a month.

Do you prefer running in the morning or evening and why?

I enjoy running in the evening. It's a best way to unwind from work.

Do you eat before running or after?

I can only burn about 650 calories on 60 minutes of running. I do need to snack before I run. My running time is 5pm-6pm and then I eat dinner after running.

What's your pre-run meal/snack? What's your post-run meal/snack?

When I am really hungry I take banana as pre-run meal. It is easy for my digestive system. It is high in carbs and potassium.

How long is a short run for you? How long is a long run?

5K is short run and 15K is long run for me.

How do you keep yourself hydrated during a run?

I drink Gatorade after a 5K run.

Do you stretch before and after a run and why?

No stretch. But I run slowly first 1K about six minutes.

What are your preferred running shoes and apparel for running?

I like Nike Zoom Fly Flyknit. It has lots of cushion. This type of shoe uses carbon fiber plate which Nike advertises as "launchpad." This plate is noticeable. I am not interested in apparel.

Do you run with any gadgets? What are they and why?

Only a Garmin Forerunner 230 GPS watch. It will show how fast and

how long I am running. I can upload to App "Garmin Connect" and I can view my activities and share relevant data with the Garmin Connect network. I can also compete with friends monthly.

What's better: Running alone or with a running mate?

I like to run alone because I can rest and slow down whenever I want. One of the advantages with running with someone is I can push more and go a longer distance.

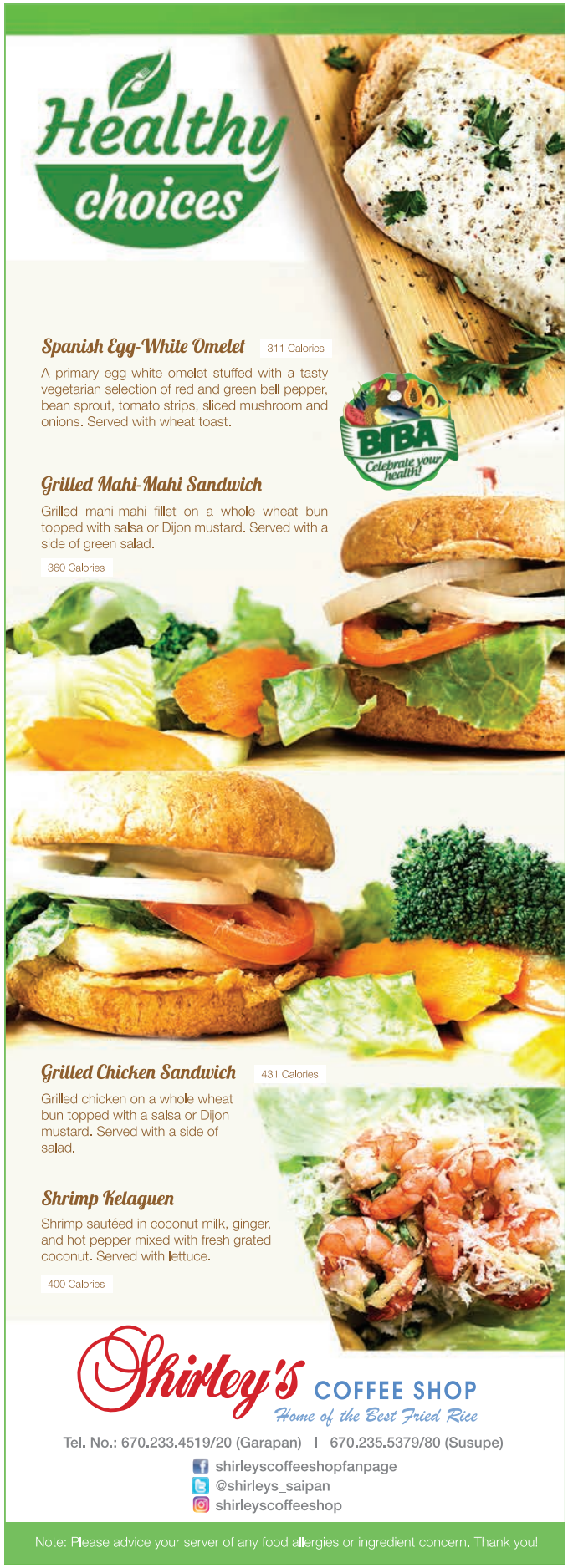
Why do you like running? What do you get from it?

Running can significantly improve physical and mental health. It's also an easy way to burn calories. Running also helps me sleep better.

Any tips for aspiring runners out there?

A lot of running events were held on island this year and thousands of people participated—JP Run, Triple J Color Run, *Marianas Variety* Mother's Day Run, McDonald's Run, trail runs, Hope Run, etc. Definitely, these events give participants the pleasure of running. Some people might join because they want a free T-shirt and join the raffle, but this is still a good first step. And this kind of events cannot be held without company donations and dedication from the community. The media can also inspire and help get rid of running's negative image and let people think running is cool and allow them to reap the benefits of running. TG

Contact Mark Rabago at mark_rabago@saipantribune.com.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Vidal Camacho, left, and Bong Malasarte, right, relax with other members of the Saipan Drone Club.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

GAME OF DRONES

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

What's not to like about droning? You get to live out a childhood fantasy of being a pilot minus the fear of crashing and defying the laws of gravity without arousing your acrophobia.

Droning also is like an RC hobby hopped up on steroids. *Back to the Future*'s Doc Brown sums it best, "Roads? Where we're going we don't need roads" and that describes the exhilarating droning experience.

On Saipan, droning is fast becoming popular. So popular in fact that a small group of intrepid weekend warriors—who are not intimidated by their wives' dagger looks as they sneak out of the house with their expensive toys—have formed the Saipan Drone Club.

Two such members of the group are Vidal Camacho and Bong Malasarte. Camacho works for the U.S. Postal Service in Chalan Kanoa, while Malasarte own Armatech Corp.

Camacho said it was 2016 when his wife asked him a loaded question: What he wanted for Father's Day. After a bit of research on YouTube, he settled on a drone. "The things that I could see through aerial footage made me want to have my own drone," he said.

An unmanned aerial vehicle, commonly known as a drone and referred to as a remotely piloted aircraft by the International Civil Aviation Organization, is an aircraft without a human pilot aboard. Its flight is controlled either autonomously by onboard computers or by the remote control of a pilot on the ground or in another vehicle.

—Educalingo

It helped that, on top of the adventures the gadget promises to bring, he also saw the many other ways that drones could be used: aerial photography for journalism and film, express shipping and delivery, gathering information or supplying essentials for disaster management, law enforcement and border control surveillance, storm tracking and forecasting hurricanes »

OCT/NOV/DEC 2019 SPORTS CALENDAR

OCTOBER

- **Bike for Her**
  DFS Saipan hosts this bike race in support of the Breast Cancer Awareness Month.
- **All Schools Cross Country Championship Series**
  The Public School System teams up with Northern Marianas Athletics for a series of races featuring elementary, middle school, and high school students.
- **Micronesian Cup**
  Paddlers from Saipan, Guam, and Palau battle in the outrigger canoe competition, which the latter will host this year.

NOVEMBER

- **TanHoldings Tennis Classic**
  After last year's tournament was shelved due to Yutu, TanHoldings Tennis Classic will celebrate the 10th edition of the competition this year.
- **Turkey Trot Run**
  The traditional trek to Mt. Tapochao the morning of Thanksgiving Day is expected to draw hundreds of runners.

DECEMBER

- **Hell of Marianas**
  The century cycle race will bring together visiting and local bikers, as they cruise around the scenic spots of Saipan from south to north and back.
- **Christmas Island Relay**
  Want to somehow lose what you gain from the holiday season feast, join the 13.1-mile race from the Pacific Islands Club in San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi.
- **NMIFA Fall Challenge Cup**
  Select teams from the competitive division of the NMIFA Fall Youth League test each other's might for the coveted Cup.

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HEALTH IS WEALTH

Tan Siu Lin Foundation

This drone photo taken by Raymond Zapanta shows the destruction of Super Typhoon Yutu after it hit the CNMI in the latter part of October 2018.

and tornadoes, and many more.

So it came to pass when Father's Day 2016 came that Camacho's wife and their children surprised him with his first drone, a DJI Phantom-4.

He wasted no time registering his new toy online through the Federal Aviation Administration (a requirement for drone users and costs $5 per year) and did his first flight on Micro Beach. Since then, he has immersed himself in his new hobby and buys a new drone every year. He bought himself a DJI Mavic Pro 2017 in 2017 and DJI Phantom-4 Pro Plus in 2018. For 2019, Camacho is still on the wall on which one to buy.

"These grownup toys maybe a bit pricy but it gives me joy in what it does. The aerial footages are so amazing," he said.

Droning has also brought Camacho closer to his children. "I started teaching my kids. My first-born, Vidal, and second one, Irie, love droning, too. The things I see in plain sight are very much different from what these drones see up there. The beauty of nature and the island, each festivity that I capture, are all undeniably beautiful and stunning," he said.

There are also some financial benefits. Camacho is currently one of the drone pilots of Pacific Aerial Images, an aerial video and photography company on Saipan. But he finds the fun, excitement, and the adventure it brings as his biggest fulfillment.

"I remember my first flight at Smiling Cove Marina, when I was determined to fly my drone all the way to Managaha and I did it. My wife, Petelyn, was very angry, thinking I couldn't make it but I did it and it was so exciting," he said.

Malasarte, on the other hand, got into droning in 2017 because he was attracted by the long-range remote capabilities and the clear-capture camera abilities of these new devices. His first one was an Inspire 1. "It [retracted] the landing gear every time it took off and landed. It could also carry two bottled water when I tested it," he said. Malasarte now has eight drones. "Their capabilities are almost the same. Only some features are different with each model."

He finds satisfaction in flying like a real pilot ("We can get aerial video and photos. We can update the status of places after a typhoon using aerial shots") and deems it a great stress-reliever ("It can help you lessen your stress by enjoying seeing yourself literally on the top of everything").

Camacho, Malasarte, and the rest of the members of the Saipan Drone Club try to meet each weekend, usually Saturdays, to play with their big boys' toys.

As for the drones' practical applications, the group was invaluable in giving the public the first few aerial shots of the disaster and devastation wrought by Super Typhoon Yutu in October last year. They also helped search for a missing person in 2018.

"Droning is a very good way to promote and showcase the beauty of our island Saipan for all the visitors to see. …I never regret having a drone… and it actually adds spice to my life," Camacho said.

FYI: Not all drones fly. There are also seaworthy drones that are used to take pictures and video above and below the water surface.

RAYMOND ZAPANTA

Atkins Kroll is not just about selling cars

When the Marianas International Basketball League approached Atkins Kroll to be the title sponsor of MIBL's inaugural competition, co-commissioner Clint Albert could be forgiven for not knowing about AK's rich history in the sport in the CNMI.

Yet AK (known then as Microl-Toyota), which is one of the major auto dealerships in the Marianas, has long been a CNMI sports mainstay and is, in fact, a household name in Commonwealth basketball scene since the early 1980s.

Remember the Toyota Wheels where the likes of former NCAA standout Richard Brostom, Ray Lizama, Jerome Iakopo, Edwin Bubos, Luis Cepeda, Frank Iglecias, Richard Chestly, and the late Felix Palacios played for during the men's islandwide basketball league? Throw in the names of Tony Sablan and Abner Venus, who coached and managed the Wheels for years, and you could jog someone's memory on how the then Microl-Toyota-sponsored squad figured in cardiac finishes against the favored Ol'Aces and Diaz Brothers.

Clark Boswell, AK vice president and general manager, acknowledged the company's involvement in sports, basketball in particular, and said they are pleased to sponsor MIBL and provide members of the community an opportunity »

ROSELYNMONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Atkins Kroll's Jedaial Manalo, left, takes off for a layup against Saipan Vegas' Coby Santos during their game in the 2019 Atkins Kroll Marianas International Basketball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Atkins Kroll vice president and general manager Clark Boswell, center, poses with Atkins Kroll Marianas International Basketball League organizers and game officials during the competition's launching at the AK Showroom in San Jose.

> **I am very pleased with the outcome so far, I feel like it's been a big success.**
>
> **— Clark Boswell**

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Atkins Kroll vice president and general manager Clark Boswell pulls up for a point-blank shot against two Mystique BBQ defenders.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Atkins Kroll's Jonathan Guilas, right, tries to dribble his way out of Saipan Vegas defenders.

to play, develop their skills, and stay active.

"I had heard from several people on island that AK in previous decades was very much involved in sports sponsorships in the community. It is an area where I would like to get more involved in with the community. Sports has so many benefits, whether for [children] or adults, as it promotes an active and healthy lifestyle and teaches teamwork and competition, and, of course, the camaraderie of being on a team is something I've always enjoyed," Boswell said.

With AK's love for basketball and commitment to an activity than can make a difference in people's lives and truly create a positive impact on the community, MIBL surely has come to the right place, as it seeks to groom the league to become the CNMI's premier caging.

"It's such huge honor and great opportunity for MIBL to get support from not just a big local company, but from one of the best global brands. They have been very supportive since Day 1 and for that we are thankful to Clark Boswell and the entire AK Toyota management and team. Without their support, our goals and vision for the league might not have flourished," Albert said.

Ten teams joined the inaugural season, including the AK Toyota Wheelers. Boswell plays on the team along with Jorge De Guzman and Rodney Catalla, who suited up for Micrel-Toyota squads in the early 2000s.

"I am very pleased with the outcome so far, I feel like it's been a big success," said Boswell when asked about the competition.

As of this writing, MIBL is halfway through the regular season with the battle for the last two semis berths too close to call as two teams, Caravan's and MS Villagomez, are tied for the No. 3 and 4 spots with their similar 3-2 records and five squads (AK Toyota, The Game, Aqua Resort Club, Mystique BBQ, and Bridge Capital) are lurking behind, holding identical 2-3 marks. The Top 2 teams—Saipan Vegas (6-0) and IT&E (4-1)—on the other hand, figured in a game that's one for the ages with Preston Basa knocking in a buzzer-beating triple to lift the former to a thrilling 80-78 victory.

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FLASHBACK: The 1969 Micro Olympics

ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

1 The Northern Mariana Islands jersey at the 1969 Micronesian Olympic Games, when the CNMI was still known as the Marianas. 2 The Marianas' only gold medal was courtesy of the women's volleyball team, which had Peace Corps volunteer Kurt Barnes as coach. 3 A plaque marks the 1969 Micronesian Olympic Games. 4 The organizing committee of the 1969 Micronesian Olympic Games. 5 The delegation from Palau arrives for the 1969 Micronesian Olympic Games. 6 One of the medals awarded at the 1969 Micronesian Olympic Games. 7 The bronze medal awarded at the 1969 Micronesian Olympic Games. 8 The first and only time a pole vault was held in the regional competition.

1969 MICRO OLYMPICS

FINAL MEDAL STANDINGS

DISTRICT	G	S	B	TOTAL
Palau	26	21	12	**59**
Ponape	17	16	10	**43**
Truk	2	6	10	**18**
Marianas	1	4	6	**11**
Marshalls	5	1	4	**10**
Yap	0	1	4	**5**

Editor's Note: This article was inspired by the numerous materials available in the KPV Collection (http://www.kpvcollection.com/).

Fifty years ago, the 1969 Micronesian Olympic Games—the event that gave birth to what is known today as Micronesian Games—took place on Saipan.

U.S. Peace Corps volunteers on Saipan, the Marianas Athletics Association, and each Peace Corps volunteers from the six districts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (Micronesia)—Marshall Islands, Yap, Palau, Truk (now Chuuk), Ponape (now Pohnpei and also included Kusaie/Kosrae), and Marianas (now Northern Mariana Islands)—worked together to stage the territory-wide competition from July 4 to 12.

Peace Corps volunteers Kurt Barnes and Al Snyder, who raised the idea in 1967 of holding an event patterned after the Olympic Games, were named Marianas representative and secretary general of the Micro Olympics organizing committee, respectively, while Saipan's own Felix Rabauliman was the chair.

Other key figures in the Micro Olympics were director of funds David M. Sablan, High Commissioner Edward Johnston (who threw the ceremonial pitch to Rabauliman), and Tino Olopai (who lit the Micro Olympics torch).

There were nine sports played in the Micro Olympics: basketball, baseball, swimming, table tennis, track and field, volleyball, outrigger canoe, and the uniquely Micronesian event, the Micro All-Around. Participants in the Micro All-Around did five events: coconut tree climbing and husking, spear throwing, swimming, and diving.

Over 400 athletes joined the Micro Olympics, with Palau bringing home the most number of medals (59) and golds (26).

Five decades after the historic competition, Peace Corps volunteer Kit Porter Van Meter reached out to his fellow Peace Corps volunteers and others involved in the Micro Olympics for materials (stories and photos) to be included in his project—a website (KPV Collection) dedicated to share documents, letters, academic papers, slides/film, pictures, audio tapes and records, books, and handicrafts from Micronesia.

The following are some fascinating stories and highlights about the Micro Olympics as recalled by the Peace Corps volunteers.

Prisoner runner

Majority of the athletes who represented the Marianas were from Saipan. However, the host territory also wanted to involve athletes from Rota and Tinian. In track and field, coaches Barnes and Andy Pavley flew to Rota to see for themselves the runner that people claimed was very fast. They found him—behind bars. The prisoner runner, Albert Toves, made it to the Marianas track team, as he was good as advertised, defeating Pavley in the 100m trial run (The coaches drew a lane along »

Rota's main road, with a police officer closely watching his prisoner during the time trial.).

In this Micro Olympics itself, Toves did not win a medal, as Palau's Eliezer Sebalt dominated the sprints and Ponape's Ishiro Hairens—who got his "training" by chasing and hunting deer back home—ruled the distance races and usually celebrated his triumph with a cigarette break.

Opening/closing ceremonies

The opening and closing ceremonies were held at the same location where the Oleai Sports Complex is now located, just a bit north. The parade of teams started at Mt. Carmel Church in Chalan Kanoa and participants marched along Beach Road with the Air Force Band from Guam playing and headed to the six-lane track in Oleai.

Tale of 'Mount Olympus' and Carolinian cooking pot

Following the rituals of the Olympic Games, the Micro Olympics had the torch relay and lighting of the Olympic cauldron. The relay started at Mt. Tapochao, where a bonfire was set (July 3) and the island's highest peak turned into Saipan's very own "Mount Olympus." Winners of the earlier Junior Olympics competition brought the lit torch down from "Mount Olympus" to the track where representatives from each territory took turns running with the torch. Saipan's Tino Olopai had the honor of lighting the Olympic cauldron.

A day before the opening ceremonies, organizers did a dry run for the lighting of the cauldron, which at first was made from a metal basin connected to a kerosene tank inside a 6-foot high concrete trapezoid-shaped stand. After igniting the cauldron, the metal basin melted and broke into pieces.

Enter Ben Fitial (yes, the former CNMI governor), who brought a huge and blackened Carolinian cooking pot from his grandmother's house in Oleai. Pile of rags and toilet papers were then soaked in kerosene and placed inside the old, but reliable pot and, presto, the Micro Olympics had a "new" and well-tested cauldron.

Military planes, Athletes Village, housemother

Athletes and officials from Truk, Palau, and Ponape came to Saipan on July 1 via C-130 Hercules transport planes. The Marshalls and Yap delegates (all male) arrived the next day. The visiting athletes and officials stayed at the Athletes Village at what was then Hopwood High School; later, the female participants were housed at the residence hall of Mt. Carmel High School, with Peace Corps volunteer Fay Nelson as their housemother and the lone female in the welcoming group. Majority of the participants left Saipan on July 13 and 14, while Ponape stayed for two more weeks due to transportation problems.

Ingenuous venues

If there's one thing the Micro Olympics organizers could be proud of, it's their ingenuity in terms of creating venues for the various competitions.

The "swimming pool" was actually the open ocean fronting the Garapan Fishing Base, with empty oil drums and plywood as a platform and anchored to the seafloor at 25 yards apart. Coconuts were painted white and used to keep the lane markers (ropes) floating.

Tennis and basketball shared the same courts—the now Civic Center, north of the former Naked Fish restaurant. The concrete court had to be cleared of *tangan tangan* and masking tapes were used to mark lines.

As for the track, small cans filled with oil from Mobil were used to create a six-lane running path filled with crushed coral. For table tennis, a mahogany plywood shipped from the Philippines and was surplus from materials used to repair homes that were damaged by Typhoon Jean in 1968 was fashioned into a table.

Outstanding athletes

Palau's Tony Towai stood out among the over 400 athletes in the Micro Olympics, winning medals in all six events—four in track and field plus baseball (gold) and volleyball (silver).

Sebalt won five golds for Palau, while the notable female athlete in the Micro Olympics also came from Palau—Clara Joshua (four medals in track). In women's swimming, Ponape's Eltrihne Doses and Kandalaria Bergen had five medals each.

Marianas' lone gold medal

The Mariana's only gold medal was courtesy of the women's volleyball team. Barnes coached the squad, which was captained by CNMI Sports Hall of Famer Cecilia Lisua and had Marie Pua Nakayama as setter. The Marianas spikers ruled the tournament held at the former Chalan Kanoa Elementary School after going undefeated in four games.

21 years later

It took more than two decades before the next district multi-sports event was held and that competition is what now known as the Micronesian Games. The term "Olympics" was removed from the event's name after the 1969 organizers received a letter from an International Olympic Committee lawyer. IOC insisted that it has the copyright to the term "Olympics" and threatened to take legal action against the proponents of the Micro Olympics. Barnes and company went ahead with the historic event, dropping the name "Olympics" 21 years later. TS

Note: *TAGA* Sports *used materials for this story from the contributions of Kurt Barnes, Tom Fisher, Andy Pavley, Ted Goble, Fay Giordano, Tom Zink, MZ Morgan, Dave Crutcher, Kathy Bradbury, Ralph Chumbley, Bill Sakovich, Ward Miles, and Jean Olopai to the KPV Collection.*

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RAPPELLING

Where trust comes down to a rope

BEA CABRERA
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

WIKIPEDIA

Rappelling, from the French term *rappeler*, "to recall" or "to pull through," is a controlled descent off a vertical drop, such as a rock face, using a rope. Also known as abseiling. It is also defined as the sport or activity of descending a rock face or other near-vertical surface by using a doubled rope coiled round the body and fixed at a higher point.

This copyright-free image shows a man rappelling down the side of a dried-up riverbed.

Rappelling is connected to rock climbing because of the similarity of movements, skills, and equipment needed. But the two are vastly different. Rock climbing goes up; rappelling goes down. Specifically, rappelling is the art of safely descending from a cliff to the ground.

"It is like sailing with the rope as your transportation and it's a journey because, between the beginning and the end, you see and feel incredible things," said 46-year-old Vlad Melnik, who has put in more than 20 years of experience in rappelling.

He rappels mostly on Saipan and Tinian. "I climb mostly on Saipan because it accessible as this is where I live. Tinian has a lot of beautiful walls on the south side that I want to see more of," he said.

He did rappel once in the beautiful waterfalls on Rota and the experience was so mind-blowing that he plans to go back.

He has also rappelled down the historic cliffs of Banzai, the walls of which are pockmarked by caves. It is told that the caves was where many indigenous inhabitants hid during the island's bombardment in World War II and Melnik has had the privilege of exploring some of those caves.

"There are some tunnels inside and birds nesting. The tunnels are broad that you can actually walk through without disturbing the birds," he added.

His affinity to climbing down cliffs is perhaps not surprising, considering that he grew up surrounded by mountains. He describes his childhood as a happy one. "We were raised and grew up playing in the forest. Surrounded by beautiful nature is a part of my life," he said.

Which is why he fell in love with Saipan when he first got here in 2008. "When I came to Saipan and saw how beautiful the island is, I immediately thought I am in paradise."

With his many years of mastering the art of rappelling, Melnik said it is fun and easy but, like any other adventure sport, one cannot take it for granted. "It's really just cool when you are hanging on the rope and you see the sky above you and the blue ocean under your feet, with thundering waves crashing on the cliff wall but one has got to stay humble because one mistake and you are done."

"One of the reasons why I do it is to check and challenge myself. It's a risk and the risk is the fee that I pay gladly because this is like a personal journey to learn more about myself," he added. »

Vlad Melnik has put in more than 20 years of experience in rappelling.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

One has got to stay humble because one mistake and you are done”

Aside from the interest, having the proper equipment is also a requirement. Basic gear would be a rope, helmet, gloves, and the gear that will keep you and the rope together: a climbing harness, carabiners, and figure 8 descender.

Interest and gear are, however, useless in and of themselves. One must also have proper training, Melnik said. “I do this for passion but I strongly recommend training, which still I [go through],” he said. “For beginners, passion is one thing but knowledge and skill training are a must in this sport because, like any other sport, you have to get some training and lessons.”

Aside from putting his trust in the sturdiness of his rope, Melnik says the experience will also teach you to listen to your gut instinct.

“When I am close to making a decision and something inside says it is not right, I don’t go for it. This sport has also taught me to trust my instincts—both in life and in the mountains.” TS

Contact Bea Cabrera at beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com.

This copyright-free image shows a man rappelling down the side of a mountain.

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA

Pokémon Go, an augmented reality game created in Japan inspired by the famous anime Pokemon, has taken the island by storm as it allows individuals to get up and go to Pokestops that litter the island in order to catch wild, sometimes extremely rare, Pokémons.

‘Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.’

—Arthur C. Clarke

Gaming that makes getting active real

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

With technology now intruding into nearly every aspect of how we go about our daily lives, even a walk in the park is no longer just a casual stroll. When interspersed with the wonders of augmented reality, one can watch a unicorn gamboling on the grassy lawn of the Inos Peace Park. Making it even more fun, the augmented reality game, Pokemon Go, has made the mundane task of walking an adventure.

Lena Sablan, who, as an 18-year-old, grew up steeped in the wizardry of modern technology, uses it mainly to get in touch with loved ones, getting tedious errands done, and for all-around entertainment purposes. Not so much for physical activity, though. She has no interest in physical activity apps, nor anything that would nag her about putting in so many steps in a day.

Not until she got hooked on Pokemon Go, or PoGo, as millennials call it. The anime-inspired, AR game pushes a person to actually go out, interact with one’s surroundings and with others, and boost one’s scores by requiring gamers to collect cute little creatures called Pokémon using your smartphone at select Pokestops. Yep, these creatures are invisible to the naked eye and can only be seen when a smartphone is pointed at them. And the more Pokemons you collect, the higher goes your score.

Now an avid PoGo player for three years, Lena explains the many benefits she has reaped from building up her collection of invisible creatures.

Physically beneficial

The mechanics of the Pokemon Go game requires a person to actually go to physical locations and find the hundreds of Pokemon that are hiding out there in the wild. That has pushed Lena to be more physically active.

“Before the game, I lived a sedentary lifestyle, but now I move a lot more. In the game, you need to walk a certain number of kilometers in order to hatch an egg, which contains a Pokémon that has higher stats than those you’d catch anywhere in the wild. Egg hatching distances range from 2 km to 10 km. So I need to do a lot of walking to hatch my eggs. Also, there’s an option to designate a Pokemon as your buddy, and if you walk a certain number of kilometers, then you’d get a candy, which can help you level up or evolve your Pokemon,” she said,

Lena admits that she has gotten quite addicted to finding pokestops across the island. “I used to sit and do virtually nothing physically strenuous, but now I walk around the parks and around Garapan where Pokestops are abundant. I even lost some weight from all the walking I was doing,” she said.

Not only that but Pokemon Go has also boosted Lena’s ability to handle mental stress and improved her overall outlook on things. It has also helped her meet new people with the same interests. “Along the way I have also made lifelong relationships.”

“It gives me a lot of mental relief from the stresses of daily life. Some of my friends play it, too, so we’ve bonded over the game and have tons of fun. You also get to meet new and interesting people, some of whom I’ve become close to. It’s an all-around fun game,” she added.

Lena encourages others to try PoGo, if only because it forces you to go out and get active, instead of just staring at your smartphone all day. Along the way, you will meet people who share the same passion for the AR game as you and who share the same physical improvements you have experienced.

Contact Kimberly Bautista at kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com.

GETTING IN *Gear*

THE GAME

REICA RAMIREZ
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

Sports apparel just was a distant dream for Clint Albert. He grew up inspired by sports apparel companies like Nike and Under Armour that started selling sports stuff out of the back of their cars. That dream remained just a dream until Albert arrived on the island of Saipan more than two years ago.

"If people can start [brands like Nike and Under Armour], anyone can. It's just a matter of pushing and doing your best in what you can do. My mind kept telling me to do it already."

An then he tore his ACL (anterior cruciate ligament). That injury sidelined him from playing basketball, true, but it also pushed him to get moving on transforming his dream into a reality. And that's how The Game Athletics came to be.

He set his plan in motion by reaching out to Derek Cutting, owner and head coach of Latte Built gym, CNMI basketball coach Elias Rangamar, and Arthur Miron,

ATHLETICS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI athletes sport some of the apparel available at The Game Athletics.

owner of Hot Deals store. Cutting accepted Albert's offer to produce Latte Built gym wear. Then Rangamar allowed Albert to create the basketball jerseys for the 2018 Micro Games.

Miron initially rejected Albert's request to have The Game Athletics wall inside Hot Deals. But then fate took over. As Albert was flying to Manila in the Philippines for his ACL surgery, Miron happened to be on the same flight. They got to talking about Albert's plans and goals for his business. After meeting up again in Manila, Miron eventually let Albert launch his sports apparel inside the Hot Deals store in Garapan. By May 7, 2018, The Game Athletics was officially rolling.

Albert didn't want to have the company alone. He decided to partner with his close friend, Marco Santiago. After being accepted by Latte Built gym, Hot Deals, and the CNMI basketball team, Albert and Santiago knew they were on the right path.

The Game Athletics not only focuses on selling their own apparel online and in stores but also customizing uniforms for »

different local sports teams. Albert's business was developing and succeeding as the months went by until Super Typhoon Yutu devastated the islands.

"We were almost 'dying' in terms of sales after [Yutu] happened and it was only a few months into the business. We were thinking, 'Where do we go from here?'" Albert said. However, when things started to look better for Saipan, his business started improving again. "Suddenly, people were coming in asking for customized uniforms."

The Game Athletics started making more jerseys, dri-fit wear, jackets, hats, and more. They also started their new line of aqua wear such as board shorts and rash guards. "We always make sure the fabric and printing are good. We really try to be affordable, functional, and practical," Albert said.

Albert also wants the business to help develop local sports teams. That led to Albert and Rangamar launching the 3x3 tournament Marianas International Basketball League, or MIBL in January 2019, just as the CNMI was jst getting back to its feet after being pummeled by Super Typhoon Yutu. "We fixed some of the [basketball] courts to make [the tournament] happen," Albert said. "It was a success and I saw a lot of potential [among the players]. To incorporate the brand, we created all the teams' jerseys."

The Game Athletics continues to provide customized uniforms in supporting the CNMI sports teams that are representing the islands in many international competitions. "It's not just about selling. It's about having athletes represent our brand and our islands," he added.

You can find The Game Athletics apparel in Hot Deals at Garapan and Latte Built Gym in San Jose and Kagman.

The Game Athletics Facebook page is also updated regularly for new sports apparel and prices.

For customized team uniforms, call 1-670-783-6575 or email thegameathletics@gmail.com. Stay tuned for the launch of their website: www.thegameathletics.com.

Contact Reica Ramirez via *Saipan Tribune* at editor@saipantribune.com.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dean Blake shows off The Game Athletics' sports apparel.

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